



Athlete Profile (Local)

Chris Crews – Only Gave Up for 30 Minutes

Chris Crews, 50, from Omaha, will tell you that he earned a bachelors degree in biology and planned to attend medical school to become a doctor. In fact, in 1987 he was accepted into the University of Nebraska Medical Center School of Medicine. That same year though, his plans changed significantly.

Crews served in the Army from 1976 to 1978, and then spent eight more years in the Army Reserves. During his military service, Crews was stationed in Korea, and later in Kentucky as a radio operator. His love of medicine led him to a job as a medic while he was in the Reserves, earning him the distinction of being the first reservist in the country to pass the advanced medical NCO course. Crews knew what he wanted to do with his life, but a rare brain stem stroke in 1987 caused everything to change.

Instead of Crews training as a doctor, he now says he “trained a lot of doctors” with his rare condition, one that left him temporarily paralyzed from the neck down. Reflecting on that now, he says it was during this time he experienced his “30 minutes of giving up.” He describes himself as “stubborn and a fighter,” and is proud of that depiction. In the 21 years since he had the stroke, he doesn’t get defeated very easily. Through hard work and a steadfast determination, Crews is now able to walk with a cane.

When Crews heard about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, he discovered that he didn’t need to use a wheelchair full time in order to participate. (The rules of the event stipulate that the athletes must require a wheelchair for sports competition, which Crews does.) In his youth, Crews says he was “pretty good at pool and archery.” So, he has dusted off his cue stick and is practicing at a local pool hall several nights a week to prepare for the 2008 Games in Omaha this July. In addition to the 9-ball event, he also plans to compete in archery and track.

According to Chris Crews, over the last 20 years he felt he was either “too disabled or not enough disabled” to participate in a lot of activities. Now, he says, “The National Veterans Wheelchair Games will give me an opportunity to feel like I can do something again. I figure there is always someone worse off than me and we should be proud of the veterans who are willing to risk competing.” At the July event, this veteran’s never-give-up attitude will surely come in handy.